

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

Claim 1 (Currently Amended): A process for the preparation of expandable vinylaromatic polymers comprising:

- a) forming ~~[[an]]~~ expandable ~~[[bead]]~~ beads by polymerizing in aqueous suspension at least one vinylaromatic monomer in the presence of a suspending agent selected from inorganic salts of phosphoric acid;
- b) recovering the expandable ~~[[bead]]~~ beads from the reaction container;
- c) washing the expandable ~~[[bead]]~~ beads thus obtained with an aqueous solution containing 0.005-2% by weight of a non-ionic surface-active agent;
- d) recovering the washed expandable ~~[[bead]]~~ beads substantially without any inorganic salt of phosphoric acid, on the surface, and drying them in a stream of air.

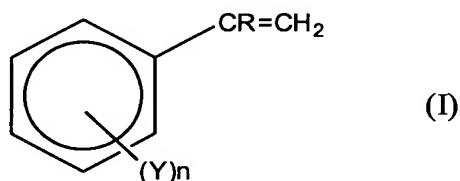
Claim 2 (Original): The process according to claim 1, wherein the polymerization in aqueous suspension of the vinylaromatic monomer is carried out in the presence of an initiator system and an expanding agent.

Claim 3 (Original): The process according to claim 2, wherein the initiator system comprises two peroxides, one with a half time of an hour at 85-95°C and the other with a half time of an hour at 110-120°C.

Claim 4 (Currently Amended): The process according to claim 2, wherein the expanding agent ~~capable of being englobed in the polymeric matrix consists~~ is selected from the group consisting of liquid substances with a boiling point ranging from 10 to 100°C.

Claim 5 (Previously Presented): The process according to claim 2, wherein the expanding agent is added in quantities as to give a polymer in the form of beads which can be transformed to produce expanded articles having a density ranging from 5 to 50 g/l.

Claim 6 (Currently Amended): The process according to claim 1, wherein the vinylaromatic monomer is selected from those having the general formula:



wherein n is zero or an integer ranging from 1 to 5, R is a hydrogen atom or a methyl and Y is a halogen, ~~such as chlorine or bromine~~, or an alkyl or alkoxy radical having from 1 to 4 carbon atoms.

Claim 7 (Previously Presented): The process according to claim 1, wherein the non-ionic surface-active agent is selected from the group consisting of an alcohol, a C₈-C₁₈ ethoxylated and/or propoxylated fatty acid, an ethoxylated and/or propoxylated glycerin ether with an average molecular weight Mw ranging from 3500 to 5000, a glycol condensed with ethylene oxide and/or propylene oxide, an ethoxylated and/or propoxylated nonyl phenol with 0-5 units of ethylene oxide and/or propylene oxide, an ethoxylated and/or propoxylated sorbitol with 5-20 units of ethylene oxide and/or propylene oxide, a fatty acid of coconut salified with K, MEA and mixtures thereof.

Claim 8 (Currently Amended): The process according to claim 1, wherein the washing takes place at a temperature ranging from 20 to 50°C, in a stirred container

containing the surface-active agent in a concentration ranging from ~~0.005 to 2%~~ 0.01 to 2% by weight.

Claim 9 (Previously Presented): Expandable beads of vinylaromatic polymers obtained by the process of claim 1 comprising 0.05-25% b.w. of athermaneous or refracting materials.

Claim 10 (Previously Presented): The process according to claim 8, wherein the stirred container containing the surface-active agent is in a concentration ranging from 0.02 to 1% by weight.

Claim 11 (New): The process according to claim 6, wherein Y is chlorine or bromine.

Claim 12 (New): The process according to claim 1, wherein the vinylaromatic polymers have a molecular weight Mw ranging from 50,000 to 250,000.

Claim 13 (New): The process according to claim 12, wherein the vinylaromatic polymers have a molecular weight Mw ranging from 70,000 to 200,000.

Claim 14 (New): Expandable beads according to claim 9, wherein the athermaneous or refracting materials are at least one of graphite and titanium dioxide.